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NEW BOOKS REVIEWED

PHILOSOPHY

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGION: A STUDY IN ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY. By IRVING KING, Ph.D. New York: The Macmillan Company, 1910.

THIS is by all odds the most important work in religious psychology that has appeared since "Varieties of Religious Experience." To compare it with James's brilliant essay would, indeed, be unfortunate. It has nothing of the romantic charm, variety and delicacy of observation or imaginative daring with which he unfailingly delights us. It will never hold a reader who is not interested in the subject for its own sake. The whole performance is perfectly sober and prosaic and much of it is undeniably dry. Yet it is not without a distinct attractiveness of its own. The style is admirably modest and sincere, the illustrations are excellently chosen, and the arrangement of the material is straightforward and easily followed. The account which we shall give of its contents will show that it does not lack for novelty and courage. It will not capture the multitude, but it is a noteworthy piece of scientific writing.

In one way a comparison with James is inevitable. For the author was a pupil of John Dewey in the days when the latter was founding the "Chicago School," and the present work is representative of that branch of pragmatism. The basic ideas are the same that the Chicagoans have been exploiting along all lines of psychological research: that knowledge is only one of the ways of experiencing reality, and in fact owes all its significance to the other modes of experience out of which it arises and into which it subsides. The present volume is a treatment of religion as consisting essentially, not of theories which are to be criticised as correct or incorrect from the cognitive point of view, but of a type of *attitudes* or feelings of value. Religion, then, is the recognition of certain values as of supreme importance, and its body of dogma is strictly secondary to this fundamental character. It may have gods many or few or none at all; it may promise heaven and threaten hell or it may do neither; but that something in human life is essentially worth experiencing and constitutes an objective and eternal value to which all other values are subordinate—so much it cannot avoid assuming. The validity of a creed is not to be tested by determining whether the beings whose existence it teaches really exist or not, but by determining whether these beings appropriately and adequately symbolize the values upon which emphasis is placed and these values are able to maintain their supremacy in men's estimation.

The kinship of this conception with James's "Will to Believe" will at once

strike any reader who is familiar with the Cambridge pragmatist's writings. But there is this difference: James is bent upon a defence of religious dogma. King is as far as possible from any such purpose. He believes that he can show that religious dogmas serve a highly important function, in virtue of which they possess a certain sort of "truth." But he gives us no reason to suppose that the deliberate acceptance of the dogma, or anything less than believing it because one cannot help believing, could enable it to perform this function.

So far as any possible scientific account of religion is concerned, King holds it to be utterly immaterial whether any supernatural agencies exist or not. For if there be such agencies, and if they act in the world or in the believer's soul in the way that the believer himself supposes, the scientist has no way of detecting the fact. The only interpretations or explanations that he can give must be couched in universal terms. The world is for him the realm of law, and wherever anything apparently arbitrary or capricious appears he simply takes it for granted that it is governed by laws which he has not yet discovered. The psychology of religion has no more occasion to be religious than chemistry. Religion, whatever else it may be, is a group of psychical phenomena, such as the psychologist is trained to analyze. If there be anything in it that is bound eternally to escape analysis he will never have any reason to suspect its presence. It will be as good as non-existent for him.

It has been said that our author regards religion as essentially an attitude of valuation, differing from other such attitudes (economic, aesthetic, etc.) in the fact that its values are regarded as absolutely supreme. How do they come to be thus magnified? As the result of long-repeated social suggestion. Merely individual concerns are forgotten, while those that are reinforced by constant sympathy remain and deepen. A religion of any strength or tenacity can only be developed in a compactly organized society, and the values which it exalts are precisely those upon which the well-being of the society have been found most vitally to depend: the date palm or the corn-field, the spear and shield, the family hearth, the courts of justice.

The older students of religious evolution supposed that there was a regular line of progress from animism and fetishism up to monotheism. Very pretty dialectical accounts of such progress have been worked out. But the truth is that the continuity of development is not to be found in the succession of religions themselves, but in the modifications of the complex social life out of which they have grown. When a religion declines, it is because the values which it represents have lost their primary importance for social welfare. When, for example, a nomadic people settle down to agricultural life the gods of the desert are bound to be neglected.

The rites and ceremonies of religion are not upon this view an external matter. They *are* the religion on its physical side. For man is not a bodiless spirit, and a feeling without physical expression is nothing. As the religious attitude is a social development the rites have always the character of customs. They are an integral part of the social life. In origin they may be life-conserving activities or rejoicings at the successful outcome of such activities or even mere play. But in the process by which they become the vehicle of a deepened emotion a certain conventionalization inevitably takes place.

Religion is not to be regarded as primarily a means of getting something.

Valuation and production are distinct, though it is true that they are always connected. Hence arises a new conception of the relation between religion and magic. Psychologists have assumed that these are both devices for obtaining what lies out of reach; and so the distinction was made that whereas magic operates by supposedly *mechanical* means, religion operates by the persuasion of supernatural *persons* to give their aid. For King the cleavage runs deeper. Magic is the primitive man's science. As applied in practice it is primarily an individual, not a social, concern, though there may be a public magic which it is hard to distinguish from religion. But primarily it is the individual's means of accomplishing his private ends—crushing his enemies or winning for himself wealth and honor. Religion is a social function attached to issues of public concern. When its forms are applied to merely private ends they have degenerated into magic. On the other hand, a religion without deities is perfectly possible and seems, indeed, to have been one of the most primitive types. Instead of regarding personal beings as the principal determining causes of good and evil, savages often attribute the largest part to a mysterious quasi-mechanical agency (analogous to our "luck") and religious awe then attaches to its supposed workings. Such an agency was the *manitou*, or *wakonda*, of the American Indians, not a "Great Spirit," as was once supposed; and our author finds indications of a similar conception among various other peoples.

To the professional psychologist, the most interesting passage in the work may well be an incidental discussion of the *rationale* of magical charms. The special students of the subject have told us that these charms are derived from two general principles which to primitive man appear to be self-evident—namely, that like causes like and that what affects anything affects all that has ever been closely connected with it. King has convincingly shown that this is radically incorrect. No such principles are present in the savage's mind. The magical practice is (in conventionalized form) just the sort of thing that an impulsive man's passion carries him into when he longs for what he cannot reach. If, for example, he cannot get at his enemy he must, nevertheless, give vent to his rancor, and stabbing or otherwise maltreating something that is in some way associated with him is the most natural outlet in the world. The notion that a magical effect resulted is one that a single happy coincidence would be enough to suggest.

Though deities are not absolutely essential to religion, our author is well aware that in almost all religions they have an important place. The explanation that he gives is one that is far removed from ordinary opinion, though it is closely bound up with his own general theory. Deities are not to be accounted for as personifications of natural forces, nor as souls of ancestors, nor as shapes seen in dreams, nor as hypotheses to account for extraordinary phenomena. Such beings may or may not be worshipped, but it is precisely the worship that is to be accounted for. The true explanation is simply this: that as the values recognized by religion are necessarily social values, the most appropriate means of symbolizing them is a person or persons with whom one may stand in typical social relations—as kinsman, subject, child, etc. No one ever worshipped a mere world-maker or accepted an argument for the existence of a deity if he did not believe in him already.

To say of a book like this that it is one-sided is cheap and easy criticism.

The truth is, however, that this work is the result of the enthusiastic following out of the consequences of a single fundamental principle. The weakest point is probably the hypothesis of a primitive atheistical religion. In all the religions of which we are credibly informed, it is beings of a more or less personal character that are worshipped; and, indeed, the attitude of worship is one that distinctly implies a person's susceptibility to praise and supplication. Fidelity to a theory has blinded our author to much that a less able man would not have overlooked. Despite this, perhaps because of this, he has produced a most illuminating work of which every investigator in this field for a generation must take account.

THE INDIVIDUAL AND REALITY: AN ESSAY TOUCHING THE FIRST PRINCIPLES OF METAPHYSICS. By EDWARD DOUGLAS FAWCETT. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1909.

The construction of a system of metaphysics is like the child's play with his building-blocks. You start from a foundation of solid truism—the immediate testimony of consciousness, you call it—and upon this set safe and steady probabilities and then more and more shaky possibilities, balancing the crazy structure carefully as it rises higher and higher; and when at last it comes crashing down, you gather up the blocks and, undaunted, build them to a dizzier eminence than ever. From the obvious to the ridiculous that is the game.

This is what Mr. Fawcett has been doing, and hugely he has enjoyed the sport. And now that he has succeeded in rearing a particularly tall and shaky tower, he is eager to have us come and look at it before some little accident topples it over.

The book is divided into three parts. The first two deal with the more technical questions of metaphysical theory (the method, the nature of truth, the relation of mind and body, freedom and determinism), but in a breezy style that happily circumvents their difficulties. In the third part "Ultimate Questions" are considered, such as the nature of reality, the existence of gods and their relation to the cosmos, immortality. The main argument runs somewhat as follows:

Metaphysics is the study of the general nature of appearances, the attempt to grasp the universe as a whole. Whereas a science concerns itself only with some special order or aspect of appearances and so reaches results which, although satisfactory for the special ends in view, are hopelessly one-sided; metaphysics seeks principles that shall apply to all orders of reality. We must, however, recognize from the outset that all theoretical truth is abstract, and hence is essentially inadequate to portray the concrete richness of reality. A mystic vision could alone yield a perfectly satisfactory insight into things, and this we do not, at the present stage of our development, possess. Theoretical truth, such as it is, we may attain; for all appearances are real and there is no unknowable. Sound metaphysics must start from appearances as experienced and proceed on the assumption that whatever exists must be at least capable of appearing in experience—that is to say, must not be essentially different from experienced reality.

I cannot soberly think that I alone exist. Other sentient beings have an existence of their own quite apart from their occasional presence to my perception; and if they, then a whole universe as well. Each conscious centre of experience contains two aspects—the so-called subject and object